



U.S. Agency for  
International  
Development

Bureau for  
Global Health

# COUNTRY PROFILE

HIV/AIDS

## GUATEMALA

Guatemala's HIV/AIDS epidemic is growing rapidly and is especially severe among at-risk populations such as men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers. The epidemic is concentrated in urban areas and along the major transportation corridors. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates that by the end of 2003, 78,000 adults and children were living with HIV/AIDS, yielding an adult infection rate of between 0.6 and 1.8 percent.

Estimated Number of Adults and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (end 2003)	78,000 (Range 38,000–130,000)
Total Population (2004)	12,661,000
Adult HIV Prevalence (end 2003)	1.1%
HIV-1 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas	
Population at High Risk (i.e., sex workers and clients, patients seeking treatment for sexually transmitted infections, or others with known risk factors)	3.3%
Population at Low Risk (i.e., pregnant women, blood donors, or others with no known risk factors)	0.8 %

Sources: UNAIDS, U.S. Census Bureau

The Guatemalan epidemic is spread primarily through sexual activity. UNAIDS (2004) cites that among all reported AIDS cases, 75 percent were transmitted heterosexually, and 17 percent were transmitted via men who have sex with men.

HIV rates of more than 1 percent have been reported among pregnant women in some urban lowland areas, and overall HIV prevalence among pregnant women tested in 2002–2003 was 0.5 percent. Prevalence among sexually transmitted infection patients tested in 2002–2003 was 3.4 percent, with levels in some areas as high as 9.4 percent. Data from 2002–2003 indicate particularly high rates of infection in female commercial sex workers (3.3 percent), and HIV prevalence is very high among men who have sex with men (11.5 percent in Guatemala City). A 2002 study among 3,300 military personnel found 0.7% HIV prevalence. According to UNAIDS, 20 percent of participants in a recent survey of men who have sex with men admitted to also having regular sexual relations with women.



According to a Ministry of Health report, 7,054 cases of AIDS had been officially reported by June 2004. Experts predict that underreporting could be as high as 50 percent. The number of AIDS cases in women has increased in recent years to 2,050 (29 percent of all reported cases). The Ministry of Health reports the male:female ratio among new AIDS cases at 1.8:1, down from an average of more than 3:1 in the early and middle parts of the last decade. The Ministry of Health also reported that as of June 2004, 380 children under 14 years of age had been diagnosed with AIDS.

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[www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov)

Map of Guatemala: PCL Map Collection, University of Texas

## NATIONAL RESPONSE

Guatemala's National AIDS Program coordinates closely with national and international organizations. UNAIDS estimates that Guatemala's total HIV/AIDS expenditure in 2000 was US\$11.9 million (including public, private out-of-pocket, and external sources). More than 60 percent of Guatemala's HIV/AIDS-related expenditures are allocated toward antiretroviral treatment; prevention accounts for approximately 15 percent. Guatemala had more people receiving full antiretroviral therapy (approximately 2,500 last year) than any country in Central America. Guatemala was approved for funding from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) in the third round. World Vision has been appointed as the Principal Recipient to manage the Global Fund resources.

Over the past several years, the Guatemalan government has taken concrete steps to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A National Strategic Plan was produced for 1999–2003 and is being updated for 2004–2008. The plan includes the following priority action areas:

- Consolidate and improve coordination mechanisms
- Strengthen the epidemiologic surveillance system
- Strengthen training and education about HIV/AIDS
- Build the capacity of health service personnel
- Design prevention policies and programs that target vulnerable groups
- Promote access to care and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS

Specific Ministry of Health activities to combat the country's growing HIV/AIDS epidemic include:

- Creation of a national unit to provide care for people living with HIV/AIDS. The principal functions of this unit are to:
  - Initiate mother-to-child transmission prevention programs that provide diagnostic testing
  - Standardize diagnostic systems
  - Provide antiretroviral therapy
  - Offer outpatient services
  - Implement information, education, and communication campaigns
- Strengthening the HIV/AIDS surveillance system to assess the magnitude and patterns of HIV/AIDS and plan for appropriate prevention and care interventions.
- Creation of a commission to improve the quality and availability of antiretroviral drugs at the lowest possible cost. The commission is working with other sectoral institutions, including the Social Security Institute, to increase the availability of antiretroviral drugs for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Support to organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS. These national organizations actively participate in Guatemala's HIV/AIDS strategic planning process. Several nongovernmental organizations provide HIV/AIDS services, including prevention, counseling and testing, and palliative treatment.
- Active participation in the Country Coordinating Mechanism of the Global Fund. The Country Coordinating Mechanism developed the national proposal to the Global Fund with the full participation of nongovernmental organizations, people living with HIV/AIDS, the Ministry of Health, academic institutions, and international organizations.
- Promotion of increased private sector involvement, which is ongoing in some prevention programs.

## USAID SUPPORT

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)/Guatemala has a relatively short history of bilateral involvement in HIV/AIDS. The Mission began bilateral support in July 2001, and has obligated \$999,000 to date to strengthen the Ministry of Health surveillance system for HIV/AIDS and to carry out a male module on sexual behaviors as part of the 2002 National Maternal Child Health Survey.

The USAID Mission allocated an additional \$997,000 for HIV/AIDS bilateral activities in Guatemala in Fiscal Years 2003 and 2004. This program emphasizes voluntary counseling and testing services and the improvement of diagnosis and management of sexually transmitted infections among at-risk populations—specifically commercial sex workers, men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV/AIDS. The Ministry of Health will improve and expand its services

for treatment of sexually transmitted infections, and services for voluntary counseling and testing to attend to individuals referred by nongovernmental organizations and to attract more commercial sex workers and men who have sex with men to use the services. In addition, USAID will encourage greater male participation in programs for the prevention and referral of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS. In addition, selected nongovernmental organizations have been strengthened to expand their outreach activities to high-prevalence populations in the capital.

The USAID Central American Regional Program has supported HIV/AIDS activities since the mid-1990s. The regional strategy focuses on areas and at-risk populations not normally covered by bilateral programs. USAID allocated \$5.95 million for regional HIV/AIDS activities in Fiscal Year 2004, and some of these funds were used to support activities in Guatemala. The Central American HIV/AIDS program works to improve the political environment by strengthening policy formulation through sound research and information dissemination. The program supports activities to strengthen the capacity of Central American organizations to deliver HIV/AIDS services and information to target groups; further, the program has developed a condom social marketing strategy that aims to reduce risky behavior in target populations. The regional program is also supporting efforts to develop a high-level national policy on HIV/AIDS, to update the national strategic plan to target efforts at the most vulnerable populations, and to reduce the stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS.

Specific USAID-funded HIV/AIDS activities in Guatemala include the following.

*Condoms:* USAID/Guatemala provides no-logo condoms that are distributed through nongovernmental organizations working with the Ministry of Health and the private sector. The condom social marketing component of the regional program emphasizes behavior change in at-risk populations and improved condom access and availability through affordable pricing and distribution through multiple channels and outlets. Interpersonal behavior change interventions with high-risk populations incorporate messages for partner reduction and fidelity. A complementary media campaign includes the postponement of initiation of sexual relations and empowering women to say no. Only 8 percent of female respondents to a 1997 Demographic Health Survey reported ever having used a condom, but another study found that 15 percent of women reported using condoms with their regular partners, and 26 percent used them with other partners. In the 2002 Demographic Health Survey, 88 percent of men did not use condoms with their regular partners, 38 percent of men with multiple sexual partners in the last year reported using condoms with all of them. The 2002 Demographic Health Survey results also showed that only 5.2 percent of women 15–24 years of age used condoms in their first sexual relationship.

*Monitoring and Evaluation:* USAID/Guatemala assisted the Ministry of Health from 2001 through 2003, through the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to establish a national HIV/AIDS surveillance system to measure the effect of national prevention and mitigation programs. The National Surveillance System continues to report HIV as well as AIDS cases. National health units are enabled to develop sentinel surveillance and special studies. The USAID Central American Regional Program continues to support this activity.

*Sexually Transmitted Infections:* USAID/Guatemala provides assistance to Ministry of Health clinics for training and equipment for treating sexually transmitted infections in at-risk populations.

*Voluntary Counseling and Testing:* USAID supports Ministry of Health facilities located in high-prevalence areas to provide voluntary HIV counseling and testing services, including the provision of test kits.

## **IMPORTANT LINKS AND CONTACTS**

USAID/Guatemala  
1 Calle 7-66 Zona 9  
Edificio Plaza Uno  
Tel: 502-2332-0202  
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[http://www.usaid.gov/locations/latin\\_america\\_caribbean/country/guatemala/](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/latin_america_caribbean/country/guatemala/)

USAID HIV/AIDS Website, Guatemala  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/aids/Countries/lac/guatemala.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids/Countries/lac/guatemala.html)

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*For more information, see [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/aids](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/aids) or <http://www.SynergyAIDS.com>.*

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